

THE
PRESENT STATE
OF
HUMAN NATURE
ACCORDING TO
THE WORD OF GOD.

*"The heart of the sons of men is full of evil: and madness is in
"their heart while they live; and after that, they go to the
"dead." Ecclesiastes ix. 3.*

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THE following tract was published by a young minister in 1773, and directed to persons of all ranks in his parish. The state of his health having made it necessary, that he should for some time desist from preaching to his flock; he judged it proper to leave with them this testimony to several important truths of Christianity. As the subjects are of general importance, and expressed in scriptural and energetic language, it is hoped its republication will be useful. Several alterations, however, have been made, and a few pages added.



EXTRACT

FROM THE

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

—MAY I not hope, that greater attention will be paid to an address from one who lately stood on the extreme verge of time ; in the most perfect exercise in his reason, viewed those awful scenes in which he expected every hour to be immediately concerned ? An address from one, who hath not yet forgotten the impressions which he felt from the thoughts of the divine judgment after death, nor the fears which guilt then awakened in his soul, nor the hopes with which the Lord, by his testimony concerning his Son, was pleased in some measure to inspire him ?

You will own, that one recovered from this condition ought to be much inclined to address his fellow-creatures about their eternal concerns ; and you cannot deny that they should be equally disposed to hear him. Much more ought this to be the case with those who have hitherto paid little attention to these matters, or who have delayed the consideration of them to an uncertain futurity. Let that future hour, so often thought of, be this ! delay not any longer the interesting meditation. This, my friends, is the disposition of every individual of the human race, in their first state : They give fewer thoughts to the condition of their souls, than to their most unimportant concerns : They meditate more about the veriest trifles, than about this one thing needful : Or if some, more thoughtfully disposed, turn their attention to these subjects, they only speculate about them, and are thus *foolishly deceived*. If conscience, or conviction, in reading or hearing the word, at any time rouse and arrest them, they rid themselves of their setters, by the false and absurd excuses with which their own hearts, and the devil, and the world, furnish them so plentifully. They compare themselves with others ; by the compari-

son and forgetfulness together, they bring down the number and the guilt of their sins almost to nothing. They dwell on that common, but most absurd idea, of a kind of mercy in God which vents itself without regard to wisdom, or holiness, or justice, or truth. They swell their outward privileges and performances into a respectable size; and by joining these to their acts of justice and humanity, they thus press down the scale opposite to that in which they laid their sinfulness and guilt. But though these expedients may give ease in an hour of health and outward prosperity, they cannot support the mind when it seeks some prop on which to lean in distress; or when death and judgment, and all their awful issues, are the object of dread. Alas! in vain shall these hiding-places in life be sought after death to cover from judgment! In vain shall those arguments be used with God and their awakened consciences, which they once used with themselves and one another! The hail shall sweep away every lying refuge; and their anguish be increased, by their rage at those who never sought to awaken them from their dream while they lived; and by their sad self-indignation at being so long the willing subjects of the grossest and most palpable deceit.

I most firmly believe that this hour is fast approaching; every passing moment speeds it on! In the view of it, I wish to write this address to you. In the view of it, may the Lord grant each of you to peruse what I write. Examine it, I beseech you by the Scriptures; receive or reject, according to its agreement or disagreement with them. I ask not, for any thing I write, the least respect, or belief, or indulgence, if the word of God is not its foundation. Let me only entreat you to take the earliest opportunity of comparing them together; and *till* you compare them, grant me the same favour which the woman of Samaria found from her country-folks, who credited her report, and conformed to it in conduct, till they themselves came and saw. —



Attend my friends, to the representation which God, the only right Judge, and the true and infallible Witness, gives of the present state of the nature of man!

SECTION I.

YOU will all be ready to own, *that there is no man that sinneth not*, 1 Kings viii. 46.; *that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*, Rom. iii. 23.; and *that there is not even a just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not*, Ecclesi. vii. 20. But the word of God goes farther than this. It asserts, that *there is no difference*, Rom. iii. 22. among men with respect to sin and innocence; that the whole world, except the chosen of God, *lieth in wickedness*, 1 John v. 19.; *that all men are under sin*, Gal. iii. 22.; and that all men have committed acts of sin, so many and so great, as to have one of their chief characters marked with truth from that circumstance. We are denominated and described in scripture as sinners: *By the offence of one, we were made sinners*, Rom. v. 19. *There is none righteous; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.* This our character is neither accidental, nor is it possible that at some future time it can be differently described: For these outward acts proceed from an inward principle,—from the disposition of our nature. *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefis, false witness, blasphemies*, Mat. xv. 19. *The imaginations of the thoughts of our hearts are evil, only evil, and that continually*, Gen. vi. 5. Sin has become the very instinct and infallible yet spontaneous tendency of every individual. We love and commit it as naturally as the babe desires the breast, or as the ox *drinketh in water*, Job xv. 16. And the tendency is early; for *we are estranged from the womb, we go astray as soon as we are born*, Ps. lviii. 3. No sooner are we moral agents than we are sinners:—Nay, it is immediate and continual. Even those who strive against sin; even those who, by the grace of God, have obtained the dominion over it, are

sometimes ensnared, and do the things which they incline not for the most part, and even struggle against and abhor, Rom. vii. throughout. Now, as we pronounce a tree of the same kind with the fruit, which it has never failed to produce, for many a season, and in every soil; so from the never ceasing acts of sin committed by all men in every country, the sinfulness of our nature most manifestly appears.

You see then the folly of the common saying, "*That a man's heart is better than his life.*" It ought to be inverted, and then it is true: "*The life must ever be better than the heart;*" just as there is more sap in the trunk of a tree than in the branches, and more water in the fountain than in the streams. Do you wish to know what this inward principle is, from which these acts of sin proceed? Its appearances are manifold; and it would require many words to describe it, or them completely. But they may be comprehended in one sentence; ENMITY OR HATRED AGAINST GOD. *The carnal mind* (i. e. the mind of the flesh, the mind of every man by nature) *is enmity against God*, Rom. viii. 7. We are all in our first state *enemies to God by wicked works, and in our minds*, Col. i. 21.

If, my friends, you have not been convinced of sin by the power of God, you will think it strange that I should charge you with possessing or cherishing so diabolical a disposition; and your hearts must rise against my impudence, while you are disposed either to resent it, or to smile at my folly. But will you be pleased to consider, what you would esteem sufficient proofs of hatred in one man towards another: Be ingenuous in searching your heart for the same symptoms of this disposition towards God; and I am confident, that you may discover every thing with respect to him, that would be sustained and resented as evidences of the most deep-rooted malevolence against a fellow-mortal. At any rate, the divine testimony is explicit and positive upon this subject: Rom. v. 10. Col. i. 21. Rom. i. 30. Eph. iv. 17, 18.—*And who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?*

The question "*How can this be?*" doth not alter the fact. We must, and do, believe a thousand things for which we cannot account. It is enough for us to know

—and this we do know from God's own testimony, that our first parents forsook God for the creature, and believed the tempter rather than him; and that this is the disposition of all their posterity. We are *dead in trespasses and sins*, Eph. ii. 1.; as totally devoid of spiritual life, as a dead carcase is of natural, James ii. 26. And in this temper there is a sufficient reason to account for all the opposition to God, and for all the hatred of him, which the scriptures assert to be essential to the natural man: *For the friendship (or love) of this world, is the hatred of God. Whoever will be a lover of this world, is the enemy of God*, James iv. 4.—*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*, 1 John ii. 15.

When the inferior principles in man assume the government of his heart, man is sinful. The mere excess and superiority of those dispositions which we naturally possess, produce every positively evil principle that reigns within us. I appeal to every one of you, if this either is not, or has not been, the tendency of all your hearts. Have you a heavenly life? Is your mind employed about any thing but the accommodations and satisfactions of the flesh? Is it, or has it been your frequent thought that you have a connection with God—a dependence on him—an intimate relation to him? Do you maintain any correspondence or communion with him? Is he the object of your delight, or satisfaction or worship? On the contrary, is not this world your all? do not the hearts of those of you who are in any degree exalted above the rest, pant for its honours,—its vain distinctions—or its wealth,—as your principal object, in separation from God, and without regard or subordination to his glory?

With what wish are the hearts filled of those of you in the middle rank of life?—What is the object of your diligence in business, but independence and tranquillity at some future season,—in a snug retreat from the labours of life?—The object of the lowest is of the same kind. The repose of the evening, or the rest at the end of the week, joined to the support of your family, are alone sought by you in all the toil and fatigue you endure. And though you cannot hope to rise from your mean condition, yet to be distinguished by the least things a

bove those equally low is near your heart. The hope of seeing your children, if you have any, in a higher sphere, is often thought of and indulged, and endeavours used for that purpose, without respecting the Lord as the blissful object of our souls, the author of our being and our all, and the supreme disposer and sovereign of every event upon earth.

Now, what is the language of this conduct, but, that we are made for this world alone—connected merely with the objects in it, and that they are to be pursued as distinct things from their Creator? Enmity against God—alienation from him in heart—disregard of his will—breach of connection and correspondence with him,—follow naturally and infallibly upon this: so that the rising of one scale doth not more naturally sink another,—so that darkness doth not more naturally succeed the absence of light,—than the love of the things that are seen banishes esteem and respect to the invisible JEHOVAH; for *lust*, (i. e. desire), *when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin*, James i. 15.

But in opposition to these truths of divine revelation, some, I know, are disposed to plead their freedom from every outward act of gross sin.—“I am not, says one, an extortioner, an adulterer, nor even as this publican: Who can lay an unjust, an unkind, an intemperate act to my charge?” I allow what you allege, but I deny your conclusion. *He who offendeth in one point, is guilty of all*, James ii. 10. A man may be in every respect moral and irreproachable; he may be able to defy the world to accuse him of any one transgression; and yet, in the sight of God, he may be a sinner like others, and a depraved principle may exist as really and in as great vigour in his heart. The divine law is, and must be, spiritual. It must take cognizance of the most secret affections and desires. It is as really broken or obeyed by these, as in our outward conduct. Thus you see, according to the meaning of it, which Christ (did not add, but) vindicated and explained in the 5th chapter of Matthew, causeless anger is murder—the most short lived and transient lust is adultery—the light and irreverent use of every sacred expression, is profane swearing. Now, though you may plead Not guilty, if arraigned, of shed-

ding blood, of actual uncleanness, of the invasion of your neighbour's bed, or of the awful profanation of the name of God and wicked curses ;—yet, can you, in the presence of that God who searches the heart,—whose eye is now upon you while you read and think of the question,—can you say that you are innocent of every breach, in thought, word, and deed, of the exceeding broad law of God ?—Dark, indeed, must be the cloud that covers you, if you answer “ I am innocent.”—But if you own the contrary ;—if you confess that you have harboured many a foul thought, and many a sinful wish, which never were shown in action ;—what restrained them, I pray you, from shewing themselves ? Had it been the love of God or a sense of his glory, and your obligations and subjection to him ; would not that have restrained the inward as well as the outward lust ? Had it been the hatred of the sins themselves that deterred you from committing them ; that too would have extended itself to the inward desire, as much as to the open act. Had it been regard and love to holiness ; that would have inclined you to every positive holy duty, as much as to outward abstinence from sin :—You would love God ;—you would delight in him ;—you would obey, or endeavour to obey, all his laws :—you would be for ever humbled for your shortcomings and sins :—and you would seek to be found in Christ Jesus, not having on your own righteousness, but that which is of God, Phil. iii. 9.

The truth is, that the place and circumstances in which providence fixes us, the businesses we are led to follow, or the bodily constitution we have received ; either put the commission of some sins out of our power, or do not tempt us to commit them. Cowardice, and the fear of revenge, withhold many a man from detraction and quarrellousness. A sickly constitution, or poverty, prevent the indulgence of intemperate and sensual appetites. Affluence suppresses the workings of discontent, and the most manifest effect of covetousness in robbery or theft. Or sometimes one lust overpowers another, and doth not permit it to express itself. Avarice combats pride, when it would shew itself in costly pleasures and entertainments ; and luxury, and many an indulgence,—dear to us, but for their expence. Or tem-

pers prone to thoughtless profusions occasion both your hatred of niggardliness, and your accidental acts of thoughtless generosity. Or motives still of a different kind are perhaps the cause of your abstinence from vice. Your family, or your neighbourhood, are sober and decent:—Thus your pride, your fears of contempt, and censure, and unpopularity, make you also sober and decent.—Or you may be under authority; a child or a servant:—Fears of correction, or banishment, may thus influence your conduct.—Or you may have heard that sinners shall be damned:—You may have been told, that *they shall go away into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*—This, as a notion, may float in your head;—it may hunt and affect you;—and you may suppose, that a regular moral life will secure you against this impending vengeance.

But, my dear friends, if any or all of these motives united are the only restraint upon your inward desires— if these *alone* prevent the indulgence of them, are you on that account to be differently characterised from the rest of the world? Are you *not* to be esteemed sinners with them? Lay it down as a truth which cannot be controverted, “That there is no goodness in the life, which hath not its seat in the heart:” “That there is no action holy, which is not performed from the love of holiness and of God, and under the deep sense of his well-founded authority.” Be assured, that the outward regularity and moral conduct which proceed from the love of reputation, the fear of punishment, or the mere dread of that authority, which rests on power and severity alone, is not in any degree valued by God, and ought not to be esteemed by men, (if they could see its motives,) because in no respect valuable in itself. We judge so in other things. We do not praise mercenary obedience, nor esteem a person on account of that conduct into which he is terrified by threatening. Neither doth *even the world* think him a just man whom the fear alone of the gallows restrains from theft; nor do they thank the benevolence of him who discovers a laid train of mischief to society, merely through the hopes of escaping it.

But suppose it was as you imagine, and *not* as we think,

—suppose that your abstinence from sin was really produced by true and good motives ;—yet where are your positively good actions ? The omission of good, as well as the commission of evil, constitutes you a sinner :—both are prohibited.—Even in negative precepts, as the excellent catechisms of the Assembly of Divines set forth, which are the faith of every *honest man* in the church of Scotland, there are things required as well as forbidden. At the last awful inquisition of characters, the sentence doth not so much proceed on what *hath* been done as on what *hath* not been done. The proofs of the guilt of the condemned, produced by the infinitely impartial Judge, are not actual transgressions, but failures in duty. See Matth. xxv. Now, my friends, apply all this to the present case ;—and let the mouth of the sober, and decent, and moral, be shut, —while their hearts swell with the humble confession, “ Let GOD be true, who hath concluded the whole “ world under sin.”

But if all the world are under sin,—Are there none, it may be asked, but sinners in it ? Is there no man upon earth more holy than sinful ? Is there no man who loves God better than the world, and who is entirely subjected to him in heart ? Yes, my friends, there are such upon earth—But these are men not in the state of their nature :—These are *new-born* creatures :—These are they who are reconciled,—who are adopted,—who are made holy.—Yet the very use of these terms, in describing their character, supposes them to have been once enemies ;—children of another family, *i. e.* children of wrath and impure and unholy.—It is not by any rectification or reformation of their original nature that they have acquired this character, but by the free gift of another.—It is not by the *prevention* of the effects of Adam's sin they can thus be denominated ;—but by a pure sovereign act of God,—out of the course of nature—turning the stream of sin and misery from the channel in which it naturally flows.—Such distinctions do not then affect the argument of this address : For we have not held forth what men *can* be made, nor from what they *may* be delivered ; but *what they are*, and *where they tend*, —unless divine grace miraculously interposes in their

behalf. Ask any person who is truly holy—who really appears to love God, and to glorify him;—and he will tell you, “That he was once a child of wrath as others;—that he once hated God,—abhorred his will,—served divers lusts and pleasures,—and was a poor foolish deceived creature.” He will add too, That only by the grace of God he is what he is;—that towards him it has been exceeding abundant;—and that for his present happiness, and state, and hopes, he cannot give any reason, but that in which Jesus rejoiced, *That so it hath seemed good in the sight of God*, Luke x. 1. and that in which Paul rested, even that the *Lord hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and hardeneth also whom he will*, Rom. ix. 18.

If all mankind then are sinners by nature;—if their acts of sin flow from a foul spring that lies within them, the streams of which have polluted their whole soul;—of what kind are all the actions of every man in this condition?—Many splendid deeds (it is granted) may be performed by them;—many things apparently good, —many things followed by the best effects to others:—But what are all these actions in the sight of God?—Let his own revelation determine:—*They that are in the flesh cannot please God*, Rom. viii. 8. *For without faith it is impossible to please him*, Heb. xi. 6. *Nay, even the plowing and sowing of the wicked is sin*, and his very prayer and sacrifice are an abomination, Prov. xv. 8. xxi. 27. xxviii. 9. Nor, think this, my friends, an arbitrary determination of the will of God, unfounded in reason, or contrary to truth. *His judgments are perfect righteousness*: And as he never calls evil, good; so neither will he ever call good, evil, Isa. v. 20. But it may even appear from what our own reason pronounces concerning the thing itself, that it must be so.—If all men in a state of nature are sinners;—if such be their character, and if their sins proceed from the love of them, and the hatred of God;—it cannot be, that any of their apparently good works flow from the love of goodness. For, can we love a mere quality, when we do not love a living object who infinitely possesses it? Can we love holiness, when we do not love the Most Holy God? Or can we love holiness and sin at the same

time? *i. e.* Can we delight in absolute contraries? Can we be equally well disposed to things at the most irreconcilable variance with each other? And if we perform acts which seem good and holy,—without love to holiness, without esteem of or regard to God,—can the acts themselves be really good? or must they not be truly hateful and abominable in the sight of God, however respectable and excellent they may appear among men? In vain, therefore, we plead our benevolent and just and humane actions, in opposition to the divine declarations of the sinfulness of our character and nature. The performance of these as little opposes our reasoning in this address, as the alleged freedom and abstinence of many from acts of sin which others commit. Indeed, even though we should allow, (what we do not believe,) that those actions of natural men which are good in their matter, proceeded from a good principle; still they might, notwithstanding, be considered as sinners like others. He who from disposition is sinful in one instance, is a sinner in the eye of God; just as he is a criminal in the view of human laws, who hath committed one act of theft or murder, though all the other actions of his life have been innocent and unblameable.

“ How absurd is it then to object against the doctrine of the depravity of human nature, or of the depravity and sinfulness of individuals, that the number of their innocent and kind actions is greater than that of their crimes! Infinitely more absurd, than to insist, that the domestic of a prince was not a bad servant, because, though he sometimes contemned and affronted his master to a great degree, yet he did not spit in his face so often as he performed him acts of service! Infinitely more absurd than to affirm, that his spouse was a good wife to him, because, though she committed adultery, and that sometimes with his lowest menials and slaves, yet she did not do this so often as she did the duties of a wife! These notions would be absurd, because the crimes are too heinous to be atoned for by many good actions of the servant and spouse of the prince; the disproportion being so vast between the merit of the one, and the ill desert of the other: But in no measure so great, nay, infinitely less than that between the demerit of our offences against

God, and the value of our acts of obedience to him." *Edwards on Original Sin*; London Edition, p. 39.

Upon the whole, then, my friends, you see that you reject the counsel of God, and are unbelievers of his word, if you do not own, that all the world are sinners in his sight: and that this character arises from our disposition, and hath its source in the heart.

I have dwelt longer upon this part of the subject than I shall upon any other, because it is the foundation of every thing in Christianity, and of every thing I shall urge in this address. And I most earnestly entreat your attention to it, to the scriptures I have quoted in proof of it, and to the whole word of God *with this view*; in every page of which, express assertions of the doctrine, or arguments which infer it, present themselves to an attentive and unprejudiced mind.

SECTION II.

I HAVE now, my friends, laid before you the finfulness of all men in a state of nature; I add, *That every man in this state is truly miserable.* The forboding of future misery may well make him so: But I refer the mention of that to another section.—My intention in this is, to shew, that every natural, unconverted man or woman, is *at present* truly wretched. The testimony of the Scriptures is as clear and express on this head as on the former. *The wicked* (says Isa. lvii. 20, 21.) *are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. Destruction and misery* (says Paul, Rom. iii. 16, 17.) *are in the ways of all*, and the way of peace they have not known.* Indeed, in the very nature of the thing, misery must ever follow sin as close as its shadow. For what constitutes one miserable, if ceaseless desire, unsatisfied, doth not? And this must be the feeling of every unregenerate person. The mind needs objects as much as

* That the sentence must be supplied with these words is evident from the context, which the reader ought to examine.

the body, and the one can be starved as well as the other. It is made for God; and nothing else fills the dimensions of its capacity, or suits its nature. When it turns away in aversion from him, it is harrassed with disappointed desires, and corroded with unsatisfied appetites. The world, with all it contains, is too gross, and limited, and perishable, to supply his room. All its abundance and variety pall at some time upon the taste, and leave its lovers to sit down in sorrow; sorrow much more poignant and severe, than that which arises from the want of daily bread. For the pain of penury is ever in proportion to the dignity of those powers and desires which are unsupplied with provision: and what is there in the world that can satisfy the appetite for spiritual good? or where can the moral sense find a fit object but JEHOVAH? Men may be insensible of this misery, because these desires may be dormant, and those powers dead and past feeling; but they are not on that account less wretched. Do we pity our species less in its most wild and barbarous condition, because they know not a better? Or are we less disposed to grieve for those who are deprived of their reason, because (monarchs, perhaps, in their own imagination) they apprehend themselves happier in their most disordered seasons than in their lucid intervals? and shall we say, that men under the dominion of sin can be in any sense happy with the highest powers and the most ardent wishes of their minds ungratified, because from insensibility to these powers and wishes, through the frequent repression of them, they do not think of their wretchedness? But much more do we say that the sinner is miserable, when we think farther, *not only that his highest desires are ungratified, but resisted and denied.* That person hath arrived at an high degree of corruption indeed, whose conscience never checks him for the commission of sin: And if he hath even come that length, it has been through long and violent resistance to its efforts. But how can he be happy, who is either obliged to exert this resistance, or who can reflect upon it! The consciousness or the remembrance must surely disturb him in a greater or a less degree. Much is thought and spoken of the pain of denying the lower powers and wishes: How many men are terrified at Christianity, by hearing

of these words, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself*, Mat. xvi. 24. ? The self-denial there enjoined, regards our base, low, unnatural, artificial desires and lusts, and the undue degree of them ; and what is the pain of this compared with the anguish of denying the understanding and the conscience ? The powers of the mind have vigour and dignity according to their superiority and importance in it. Most important and supreme as these are, what force is necessary to repel and overcome them ? Alas ! if the mortification of lust is as the plucking out of the right eye and the cutting off the right hand ; were we as awake to the one as the other, the repulsion of these would be as the tearing of the heart from the bosom, or as the torture of the body on the rack. The denial of our lusts is reasonable, and in our present state necessary. It is the will of God, it is dictated by our reason and conscience, agreeable to them ; hence arises the evil of their indulgence. But neither the divine will, nor any power we are possessed of, in its right state, can dictate the denial of conscience ! This, then, must be unmingled and unlessened misery. Consider farther, that holiness is the glory of God, that God seeks his own glory, that all things are made for it. Now, sin is not only a different but an opposite pursuit : but to pursue the course diametrically opposite to that we were made to seek, must also produce misery and torment. As a joint formed to move one way is excruciated by being forcibly strained in another ; so must the soul, created for God, be in anguish when set against him.

To all this, it will be replied by those under the dominion of sin : " No man can convince me that I am wretched, when I feel myself at ease and happy." I own it, my friends ; I own that the omnipotence of God alone can convince you, that you are really and dreadfully wretched while you are the servants of sin. Satan hath blinded you. Of what can he not persuade us ? what can he not attempt to make us believe ? is there a falsehood more palpable than another, which he hath not at one time or other circulated with success ? Could he influence Eve to credit him, (whom she then knew not) rather than God ? Could he persuade her, that the Lord,

who had but just created and blessed Adam and her, was a tyrant? Could he lead her to imagine, that by disobeying him, and eating of the prohibited tree, they could rise to his height and glory? Could he even attempt to infuse doubts into the mind of the Son of God himself concerning his own character? And is there any tale too absurd to be dressed up by him in the garb of probability, and imposed upon credulous sinners for truth? But one thing is certain—we must allow that reasoning, which we cannot answer to ourselves. Examine then my dear friends, the proofs I have urged of your misery; try to detect their fallacy; and expose it, not to me, but to your own minds: Then I allow you to disbelieve, when you thus can refute it.

Alas! my friends, the hope or the abundance, of earthly good, is what keeps you at ease, you are intoxicated by the former or by the latter, and drunk with them—You only forget your sorrow. If one moment of liberty and reflection is enjoyed by you, the truth of my representation will be then known and confessed: but it is the interest and study of Satan to keep the cup for ever at your head; and when it is empty, the fumes of it lull you fast asleep. But oh! my friends, the Judge standeth at the door, the trumpet soundeth loud, and the cry is, To judgment. Then you shall awake; the temptation of Satan is then over for ever, but the hour comes of his ungrateful triumph. How will he laugh at the calamity to which he hath allured! To his upbraiding, to the voice of God, to the departure of all your former goods, your ear will then be open, and all your feelings alive. Then, if not sooner, shall we agree in opinion; and the misery of your past days be owned, as well as the bitterness of your present.

SECTION III.

I HAVE represented to you, my friends, the united testimony of reason and of the scriptures, concerning our sinfulness and misery. I now add, that in consequence of our sinfulness, both of them concur in assuring

us, that *every descendent of Adam is guilty in the sight of God*. In every populous place there are some or many gross sinners; some guilty even of the outward acts of uncleanness, intemperance, injustice, calumny, profaneness, &c.—And perhaps those among you, of this character, will rather be pleased than offended with the account I have given from the scriptures of the sinfulness of mankind. Perhaps the commonness of the character may be abused by you to silence the alarms which conscience sounds in your ears for your sins, to banish the shame which, unless in the most corrupted places, is poured upon bare-faced iniquity, and to deaden your feeling from the fears of future wrath, to which you may, with certainty and anguish, look forward. But know, thou presumptuous transgressor, that this abuse of the truth of God is an addition to thy sins, and will increase thy condemnation: There is not any thing revealed by him that encourages sin, or is suited to make the person easy that commits it. The degrees of unworthiness, it is true, are different: but all are unworthy, all are vile, all are guilty: and you will find hereafter, (what you ought at present to think,) that your state is more dreadful and more inexcusable by reason of the numerous multitude who are sunk in the same. He who cannot lie hath said, (Rom. iii. 19) *that the whole world is guilty before God*. The whole plan of salvation by Jesus Christ proceeds upon this principle, nor can the divine procedure in providence be accounted for upon any other supposition. Indeed one should suppose, that the proofs of the sinfulness of man are proofs of his guilt.—They are so:—Yet it may be useful for your conviction, to point out *the grounds of the guilt of sin in the sight of God*.—What, my friends, is sin? It is the contempt of that which is most excellent and lovely, and opposition to it: It is the omission of what is fit to be done: It is an improper restraint of the highest and governing powers of the mind: It is want of conformity to the holy will of God, and the transgression of it. Put these together, and think of the dreadful evil included in them all—that is the evil of every sinful desire in the earliest stage of its existence. Sin includes in it a contempt of holiness and the most holy

God. Is there any thing so excellent as these?—The excellence of some things may perish, or often it is not so much in the things themselves as in their relation to their objects. Thus devils and men were once holy and excellent beings; and though they are fallen from their glory, they still continue angels and men. Thus, too, health and riches, and the other comforts of life, are blessings, and have an excellence, when one is able to enjoy them, and when they are employed for glorifying God: But such may be our situation and circumstances, that we have no relish for them: and such is our depravity, that they oftener turn us away from God, and are used oftener against him, than made to redound to his honour and praise. But the most holy Lord is unchangeably glorious—holiness belongs to his essence. We cannot conceive it, or any of his proper perfections to be lost, without supposing the greatest of all absurdities, the annihilation of God. Now herein consists the guilt and demerit of sin, that it is the neglect and contempt of this infinite moral perfection. There is not a sinful thought or wish dwelt on by us for a moment, there is not a sinful action committed by us, that does not say, *There is no glory in God, no beauty in holiness*; there is nothing in either worthy of the least esteem, or regard, or attention. Oh! my friends, what is the guilt of this? Is there any thing in the universe that doth not declare its heinousness? Insensible nature, in all its kinds and tribes, speaks for God, and tends as it can to his praise and glory: Men only and devils excepted, every system in all its parts conspires to honour him: And God, who knows well the worth of all things, and whose ends are always most excellent, seeks the glory of holiness and himself as the last and greatest end in all his works, an end so noble as to blend and unite with every good inferior one, nay, even to aid and forward them.

But farther: *The highest and governing powers of the human mind are also opposed and dethroned by sin.* The seat of our reason and conscience is shaken by it; and the soul either thrown into the wildest anarchy and confusion, or lorded over by unrighteous and tyrannical usurpers. Conscience is common to all men among us; and it has been fitly termed the *deputy* of God. Resist-

ance to it, then, is resistance to him; rebellion against it, is a real revolt from his authority, and an open breach of our allegiance. But sin is not only contrary to the will of God, as inferred from his nature and works; but *is also an avowed contempt of his expressly revealed will, and a base opposition to it.*—The traditions current among the ancient nations, and reason itself, taught them the fitness of practising many things, of which they spake, indeed, as the commandments of God: But the wisest among them saw how weak that obligation was upon the multitude, and how much they needed an express and authoritative revelation of the mind of God even concerning duty and sin. Now, God from the beginning superadded this express declaration of his will to the obscurer notices of it by his works; and those things which appear right to be done on their own account, become more so when thus directly authorised and commanded. But when his commands are *good* as well as holy and just, when they are perfective of our nature, when they are for our profit, when they are such as reason would have dictated, had it been able to have discovered the relations on which they are founded, when they are what it now most perfectly approves, when one end of God in enjoining them was the bliss and the glory of our nature; what is he who *hesitates* concerning subjection? What is his guilt who *refuses* it? nay, who uniformly opposes and contradicts these commands, so just, so holy, so wise, so unspeakably gracious? Far more, when we consider upon what the authority of that God rests, who prescribes them. What is he? what has he done? what is he doing for us? The eternal, the infinite, the unchangeable, holy, and wise, and good, and powerful JEHOVAH! The God who cannot even shew himself without conferring blessedness on some one of his works! Who is like him in his nature? And as to us, think of creation, no one can create, but God, he is our Creator.—Suppose we saw the dust we tread on informed with a living soul; made to be happy, to be happy with the happiness of the Most High, *i. e.* to be holy, and to have its bliss, like his, from thence: What would we say it owed its Maker?—Yet this is not all our obligation; we go a

step beyond it ; for we must speak what our minds imperfectly conceive ; we must tell of the formation of that very dust from *nothing*, as well as of its exaltation into a living soul ! What can we say, too, of the countless preservations and comforts, in the womb, in childhood, in infancy, in youth, in manhood, in age ; preservations from want, from danger, from a thousand calamities. Nor let each forget the peculiarities of his own condition ; the presence of so many mercies, the absence of so many evils. Let sinners think of grace, suited in every respect to our desperate condition, of the gospel, preached to enemies, of eternal life, published and free to the dead in trespasses and sins, and of the divine forbearance till this hour, while its language is plain, *I beseech you, be ye reconciled to God*. But let the reconciled through Christ, by the power of God, think of something higher. Let such think of distinguishing grace, of sovereign mercy. What is it ! to have dwelt for ever in the breast of JEHOVAH, the objects of his eternal thoughts, and counsels, and decrees ! the objects of his eternal benevolence in his Son, and of his present complacency ! the persons for whom the Son was not spared ! the souls whom Jesus loved, under the curse, as the rest, yet those for whom he gave himself a sacrifice to the perfections and law of his Father ! the temples of the Holy Ghost ! the abodes of his influence, and the filled with his glory ! the members of the general assembly and church of the first born written in heaven ! the associated indissolubly and for ever with the spirits of just men made perfect ! If *sin* be the breach of any one of these obligations ; if it amount, (as in some it must) to a violation of them all ; by what name shall we express its malignity and demerit ? *Guilt* is a weak and a feeble term, which every wise man will readily apply to the breach of any human obligation : And shall we say no more of this complicated evil ? What is ingratitude towards man, what are injustice and infidelity with regard to a fellow creature, when compared with sin as it respects the Most High God ? What duties are here violated ? what bands burst asunder ? what relations dissolved, in wish at least, on the sinner's part ? What insensibility of mind is shown ? what callousness

to every generous or reasonable feeling is discovered? Upon the whole: Is not sin, as an apostle hath expressed it, *exceeding sinful*? Ought not all sinners so to be esteemed? Is not all the world sinful, and ineffably guilty in the sight of God?

But to these assertions and proofs of human guilt, it may be replied by some, "That the sins of their life have not been produced by any settled principle in their hearts, but by inadvertence and the strength of temptations, and that the guilt of them is thus lessened or annihilated." Let us examine these evasions.—Alas, my friends, *As to inadvertence*, Have you never heard of a revelation of duty? Were you never called to watchfulness? Did you never perceive the necessity of it? Were you never told of the imperfection and weakness, if not of the depravity, of your mind, and of the snares in the world around you? But if you have been informed of these things, did not watchfulness seem a duty as indispensable as the love of God? And will you then plead one sin to excuse another? Try this upon earth: Doth the plea of drunkenness bring off the murderer from his fate? or is the sentinel held guiltless who urges sleep as an excuse for neglect of his duty? the defence is additional guilt. But did you ever in truth commit one sin through inadvertence alone? Was your mind *then* altogether unaffected or disaffected towards it? Were you perfectly without the *love* of the sin, or the lust, when you committed or indulged it? Impossible! In the scriptural and infallible account of the birth of sin, its origin is traced to *lust*; and in lust (or *desire*) the mind is not idle and inadvertent, but active and busy. Depend upon it, my friends, if you recollect your sins with care, you will find that your mind hath been perfectly conscious while you committed them: or, if you are not sensible of this, all we can say, is, that the habit of sin hath been so confirmed as to obliterate it; and that it hath grown from a thing different from yourself, into a natural and almost essential instinct, the operations of *which* we do not indeed always observe.

As to *temptation*, I admit that it hath force; and that there is not any thing without or within us that may not tempt us to sin. But how should this lessen the guilt

of it? Temptations prevail, not by constraint and violence, but by persuasion and argument. Thus the devil and the world tempt us to sin: they solicit our consent by presenting motives to our view, but they cannot compel us to yield to their influence. And what inducements or motives have they to present? Are they stronger in themselves, or more clearly set before us, than those which God hath set in opposition to them? I shall be answered, "That as we are made to be most forcibly affected by our senses, hence material and sensible objects have greater interest with us than the arguments or testimony conveyed to us by report, and which can influence us by faith alone." I reply, by allowing that we *are* worldly creatures; but I deny that we were *made* such. Man was made to live by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God, as much as by the bread which is termed the *staff* of his life. Our spiritual life is *now* indeed departed; though free and moral agents, we are really dead as to all its actings and exertions: Hence are we indisposed to trust in the testimony of a pure spirit, or to live and walk by the faith of it. But this indisposition is the source of our sin and guilt, as well as the cause of our bondage to our senses, and the temptation which comes by them; and surely a sinful and guilty disposition can never extenuate, far less excuse the demerit of sinful and guilty actions.

SECTION IV.

AS all men are sinful and guilty, it must be that *they are all under the divine sentence of condemnation.* If we receive the witness of God, this can be no doubtful matter with us: Rom. v. 8. *By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.* But besides our condemnation in our first father, all men are sinners: All men have, in numberless instances, it is owned, transgressed the divine law, from a deep-rooted disposition to do so. Now what can decide the present point more certainly than these words, Gal. iii. 10. *Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in*

the book of the law to do them. Death in all its fullness of meaning, is that curse. For (Rom. v. ult.) *the wages of sin is death*: not merely the separation of the soul from the body, and the dissolution of the latter by putrefaction and worms in the dust; but the annihilation of all spiritual life, the death of the soul to all its true joy and comfort and peace, and that degree of everlasting damnation and misery which is proportioned to the infinite guilt of its sin. And this, my friends, is not merely a positive constitution:—Not only doth this establishment rest on the will of God; but it is necessary; it must be in the nature of things; it cannot be altered. *He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.* You cast the seed into the furrow; you cover it with the soil; the season favours it; you see it vegetate and grow to the ear; at length the harvest comes, and your seed is gathered in with great increase. Believe it, my friends, sin rises as naturally to death; its progress to eternal damnation and to death, is just as certain, as that of the seed to the ear when nursed by the seasons. What fruit, then, can the sinner have of these things, the end of which is death? And what, in this view, must be the natural condition of the whole world who are all sinners? What, but that of criminals doomed to die, not yet led forth to death, and a pardon yet possible to be bestowed on them? Think what God is, and you cannot deny it: Is he not strictly just and righteous: And will he not then give each one his due? And is it not a righteous thing to recompense tribulation as well as rest? For is it not equally abominable to justify the wicked and to condemn the just? Is not the Lord holy and true? Can he then call evil, *good*, or good, *evil*? Can he put light for darkness, or bitter for sweet? What is sin? An approbation of, or indifference towards what is evil; a disapprobation of, or indifference towards, what is good? And can approbation of what is good, and disapprobation of what is evil, be shewn by outward signs? and shall they not be shewn by God? How can they be shewn properly, but by the punishment of the transgressor himself? To say then that God will not condemn and punish transgressors according to their demerit, it to utter blasphemy: It is to say that God is regardless of good

and evil; that he is indifferent towards holiness and sin. If in executing his design of bringing many sons to glory—it became him to perfect his own Son as their leader to salvation by his bitter sufferings; if this procedure became his holiness and justice, while he shewed his mercy; as much must the condemnation and punishment of the children of wrath become him, while they plead not his grace in Christ Jesus. Further; God is not only just and holy and true in his nature; but he is the moral Governor and Judge of the world: and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? A judge has no other rule but the law; as such, he passes sentence by it—And who shall impeach the truth of God? is his law and its sanction right? Was his real intention declared by them? Shall they not then be executed? Or are they mere bugbears, to alarm and frighten us, never intended to be enforced?

Besides, every good thing in the creatures, or something resembling it, and tending to the same purpose, belongs infinitely to God. A certain degree of right-founded anger, is perhaps a part of man's original innocent constitution. Men living out of society, and without its protection, need some sudden principle of this kind for self-defence: Hence it is possible *to be angry and not to sin, to be angry for a just cause*. Now, though we ought not to conceive that any turbulent emotion can be felt by God; yet we may be certain, that something which produces similar effects with anger in us, belongeth to him. When the Scripture speak of his eyes, his feet, and his hands, we know that these can only express the watchfulness, the activity and power of a spirit: And when they mention his anger; when they say that *he is angry with the wicked every day*, when they assert that *his anger smokes against transgressors*, we ought to understand these and the like declarations as intended to teach us, that displeasure with sinners, and a calm and deliberate intention to condemn and punish them, are as essential to God, as anger is to us.

“But where then (it may be said) is the mercy of God? Although men are sinful and guilty, may not this mercy prevent their condemnation and punishment? May it not dispose the Lord, though just, and the Judge

of the whole earth, to relax the rigour of his justice and the severity of his administration? Else where is the place of goodness, or the opening at which mercy can vent itself? Fatal, alas, hath been this rock to thousands! Though many a beacon hath been raised on it, yet thousands still steer the same course, regardless of the warnings of those who have themselves been endangered, and of the wrecks which float round them. But oh! my friends, consider, I beseech you, that justice and holiness and truth are *essential* to God. It is as impossible to destroy them, or to suspend or destroy the exercise of them on their proper objects, as to destroy himself: And we have shewn you, that the condemnation of sin and guilt is their proper object, and their true tendency. These are perfections that *must* be exerted; but *mercy* is a perfection altogether *free* in its exercise. God may show it *to whom he will*. It may be withheld (as it is) from one man, and given to another, for it might have been withheld from all. Was it not withheld from the angels that sinned? What *claim* upon it, then, had we? The office of trying and condemning criminals for their offences, and the power of pardoning them, do often upon earth reside in the same person: And though the judge may extend his sovereign mercy to the criminal; yet it is not extended to prevent his trial, or his condemnation if guilty. The law must first be satisfied—and a spectacle of terror held forth to society, though the person himself should afterward be reprieved or pardoned: And who censures the severity of the judge? Among whom is the opinion of his mercy lessened by this procedure? Why then should the attribute of mercy, which indeed belongs to God, in an infinite degree, dispose us to imagine that we are not condemned, while we own ourselves sinful and guilty? We are certain, that we deserve punishment. Ignorant of all the reasons for which God sometimes stops things in their course, we can have no certainty of freedom from condemnation *by his mercy*; for our souls tend to that condemnation and punishment, as naturally and certainly as the rivers rush to the ocean. If we are made partakers of the effects of the mercy of God, it will be of wise mercy, honourable, God-like, holy mercy. Mercy contrary to law; contrary to justice; contrary to truth; nay, contrary to goodness, because contrary to the general in-

terest of the whole ; is not the mercy of God : It is foolish fondness, the fruit of weak compassion, a feeling foreign even to superior human minds, far more to the infinitely perfect divine. Infinite mercy and grace belong to God ; but when he determined to shew them to men, it was in an honourable way : They flowed to us in a channel that became him. Suggesting the redemption of sinners, they suggested also the satisfaction of the law, and the display of his attributes, by the wonderful sacrifice of his own Son, as previous to the actual application of their effects to sinners. Thus they did not *prevent* the condemnation of men ; but they *delivered* them from it : They did not move God to dispense with his unchangeable law, but to magnify and fulfil it : They did not incline the perfections of God to suspend their effects, as if they or he were rigorous and vindictive ; but afforded them full scope and exercise another way. Hither then, if you hope from the mercy of God, must your eyes be turned ; you must look to mercy in union with justice and holiness and truth, not to mercy which opposes them. Man, in performing his part, may sometimes counteract his reason, and sometimes his passions : It is necessary, when we wish him to do a good action, that we address both ; whereas, when he is sought to do a bad one, interest is made with his passions against his reason. But though we are corrupt, can the glorious nature of God be at variance with itself ? Doth he ever act in opposition to his own attributes ? Or must he deny himself in any part of his procedure ? It were blasphemy to say so. And therefore, if our hope of salvation be well founded, our hearts are directed towards the just God and the Saviour, who hath declared his righteousness in the remission of sin, by setting forth his own Son as the propitiation for it.

Doth this account surprise any of you, my friends ? Are you apt to wonder that God hath not the power which man (you say) always possesses, *i. e.* to forgive offences freely, without any breach of justice or truth or positive law ? Attend, I beseech you, to your objection, and you will see it altogether inconclusive. God weighs the nature of actions ; we consider the effects of them. The punishment of God is proportioned to their guilt : *ours to the evil intended and done us by them.* The se-

curity and welfare of society render the infliction of human punishments proper ; the infliction of human punishment and the condemnation of sin by God, are necessary, from the unchangeable nature of the thing. Now, to be sure we may dispense with our own establishments ; we may alter or abrogate those things which only depend on our free-will : But God doth not, and will not, dispense with the condemnation and punishment of sin ; because he cannot but be wise and holy. Discerning things as they are, he cannot but act according to that discernment. As we perhaps punish when we ought not ; so we may pardon when we ought not ; but he is perfect rectitude and can never err. We may not therefore reason from our conduct to his. *He is God, and not man ; his thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways.*

I have thus, my friends, attempted to copy the chief lines of the human character which I can perceive to be drawn in the word of God. Alas how sad the portrait ! A sinful, miserable, guilty, condemned creature ! Yet it is the picture of you, of me, and of all the world, by nature. You much, however, mistake the intention of its being placed before you, if you suppose that your only business is to pronounce on the likeness ; or to praise the dexterity, or to blame the awkwardness, of the hand that held the pencil. To every one of you, without exception ; to the highest or to the lowest ; to the ignorant, or the knowing ; to the unbelieving, or the Christian ; *it is a speaking figure*, it dictates personal conduct. To shew you that, is the intention of the next section.

SECTION V.

IN consequence of the sinful, miserable, guilty, and condemned state of men, *they are by nature all in immediate, continual, and imminent danger of eternal ruin.*

It is appointed for all men once to die : No one is exempted from this decree. This hand that writes shall moulder in the dust, as surely as it now moves in this

employ ; and the lustre of the eye that reads what it hath written, shall as certainly be dimmed in death, as it is now open on these lines: To the grave we must all come, without any order. Sickness and pain, the consequences of penury and labour, often pass by the rich, and arrest the poor ; but the poor and the rich, the noble and the mean, the learned and the foolish, are all alike subject to this law. The king of terrors doth not distinguish, nor can he be bribed to spare: His darts fly thick around us: We cannot be assured where they will fix, till they have wounded ; nor have we ourselves greater security from them, than any other in the world. And are *we* really (with the rest) in this absolute uncertainty, and do *we* yet think every one mortal but ourselves?—Strange, unhappy infatuation? Were we even to calculate the *chances* of death, (if we may speak so concerning an event certain in itself, though hidden from us,) how trifling would the difference be between one, and another! In childhood and infancy we know, that a third part of mankind die ;—age, we are sure, hath not many years to count: But why should even youth presume on its vigour, and put off the serious thoughts of the soul to a distant hour that never may arrive? Art thou self-existent? Do strength, and health, and spirit, in which thou confidest, support themselves? And are the risks you run, and the dangers and diseases to which you are peculiarly exposed,—are these no balance against the absence of those infirmities which seem to others the forerunners of death? Which of you cannot the burning fever seize? and who waste away in the slow consumption, but such as you? Eager to face danger, to be the foremost in the hardest labour; how many disasters may you meet with, from which others are freed, because they possess not that very robustness and health in which you glory.—You see then, my friends, it is altogether impossible for any of us to say, “We shall be in this world to-morrow, or we shall not, before that time, be summoned naked spirits before an omniscient God.” Now, my friends, he that said, “*It is appointed for all men once to die,*”—said also, “*After death cometh judgment!*” The truths are coupled in one sentence ; and if the experience of every hour proves one

part of it, why doubt we the truth of the other? When heard we of one who never tasted of death, except by a miracle? Do we look for that again? Rather may we not be most firmly persuaded, that we and every one in the world shall once bid adieu to it for ever? Give credit, then, to the other part of the word of God. "*We, and every one we know, and all the world, shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; the secrets of every heart shall be revealed: we shall be judged, and receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil.*" And what good deeds, alas! hath any natural man to speak of? and what shall be awarded to those who have done evil? *Tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish, upon every soul of them.* To say what is the greatness or degree, in any view, of the punishment of the damned, doth not belong to us: into an abyfs so deep, who can steadily look? The head grows dizzy while we gaze! The eye averts itself from the sight! Yet, what must that be, which produces *weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth!* What must that be *where even one drop of water is wanting to cool the tongue of those who are tormented in that flame!* What must that be *where the worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched!* Should we even pass over in the reckoning all the positive anguish which is inflicted; should we think of it only as a state where is a perfect privation of all pleasure, while there still remains an exquisite sensibility? what wretchedness do we describe? Suppose divine goodness and forbearance and grace be shewn no more even to this world, and what are we who dwell in it? This indeed is hell.—No more vain delights now, to cloy the appetite, no more sensible goods for the heart to fasten on, no more deluding pleasures to charm away reflection. These are all gone! for what continued them but the mercy of God? The mind unemployed without, now turns inward to live on its own store; but having no gathered provision, it tears its own bowels, and seeks for life by a kind of self-murder. Hope that flattered once, is now fled for ever; for the sun, that seemed darkened only for a while, is now discovered to be dissolved; and the earth on which it shone, with all its system, is no more! What is it, then, to dwell on the

thought of the *eternal* absence of good, even though we think not of the presence of positive evil? how dreadful! to think of the eternal ascent of the smoke of torment, (Rev. xiv. 11.) and of the everlasting destruction of those who are banished from the presence of the Lord! (2 Thes. i. 8.) a punishment as certainly eternal in duration, as the reward and glory of the blessed, Mat. xxv. 46. So, my friends, it must be. For if the justice and truth of God, if his law and his character as a judge, dispose to inflict any punishment; they must dispose him to inflict the just, the true, the threatened, the legal punishment. But how would a punishment that is not eternal, be proportioned to the evil of sin, which is (in a sense) infinite? How would it answer his threatenings and declarations? for attend; there may be greater sins and less, though the nature of all is infinitely evil; just as there are particles of matter greater or less, though all may be divided (as philosophers say) into infinite parts. The one and the other are differenced, not in their nature, but by multiplication of parts: The least grain of sand is matter, as much as a mountain; the shortest indulgence of any sinful desire, is sin, and infinitely guilty, as much as the longest train of open acts of rebellion against God. And though the punishment certainly will be proportioned to the demerit, yet that difference in proportion is consistent with a sameness in eternity of duration. How can it be otherwise? how can it be but eternal, if the soul never die? The possession and the hope of the goods of this world, keep the sinner easy while here; Were it not for these, he would be as miserable in feeling as he is in reality. Now, is this world eternal? or have we any thoughts of the creation of another? What then must be the state of the soul, when, totally removed from every object and enjoyment in which it formerly delighted, it is perfectly awake to its present corruption, to its present state of intestine hostility? *If it lasts for ever, it must, even upon this ground, be for ever miserable.* But remember farther, that *as the tree falls so it must lie*—a decree shall go forth, *He that is unjust let him be unjust still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.* Of the living there may be hope; the living may be reconciled and may be sanctified; but

there will be, there can be, no change *after death*.— Now, every one knows, that sinful dispositions by continuance invigorate, and that the repetition of sinful acts is a sinful habit, and that habit is a second nature. But neither is this all: The severity of their torture, the restoration of their conscience to its power, and the appearance of the Lord as a judge and the inflicter of their punishment, must increase their hatred of God, their opposition to him, and rebellion against him. It is impossible, then, that the love of holiness and of God can ever be produced in their souls. It is impossible, that they can desire or delight in either, or ever be willingly subject to God. Accordingly, in the parable of the rich man in torment, you do not find him represented as wishing to be in heaven, however acute his sufferings were in hell, and however much he prayed a mitigation of them. Scorched by that fire, which is descriptive both of the mental and outward sorrow of the damned, he longed for a drop of water to cool his tongue, though given by one he had formerly esteemed an object beneath his notice: And he earnestly deprecated the coming of his brethren into the same place of torment, perhaps lest his own should be increased by their upbraidings. Thus it is, my friends, that hell works no change in its wretched inhabitants. The damned for ages, could they change their place, could not endure the joys of heaven, far less desire them. All its agonies do not beget esteem of God, or delight in him: For nothing but the sight of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, can win the heart, transform any one into his image, or dart a ray of hope into that abode of guilty fears, the soul of a sinner. But if the soul be not changed by its future torments; if its sinful dispositions are not weakened, but excited, by despair; if such expressions of these dispositions are shewn by condemned sinners, as they are capable of shewing in that state; must there not be reasons for the perpetual duration of their punishment, nay, for its growing greater and greater the longer it lasts?

Hear then, my friends, the conclusion of the whole matter: *We are all by nature sinful, guilty, miserable, condemned, creatures; liable, we know not when, to*

death, certainly to be judged; and therefore in continual danger of immediate and eternal misery.

Such is our wretched and miserable state as sinners; but is there no way of recovery? Yes, blessed be God, there is. This way is fully revealed in the word of God: and by an attentive humble study of the scriptures, depending on the teaching of the Spirit of God, you cannot fail to attain the knowledge of it. Search therefore the scriptures; for they testify of Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Are we by nature *sinful, guilty, miserable and condemned* creatures? *Jesus; was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21. Our Saviour was called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins, Mat. i. 21.* In what terms do the redeemed around the throne speak of the remission of sin? *To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Rev. i. 5, 6.* Many read the scriptures without understanding their meaning. They have previously formed some indistinct notion of the forgiveness of sin, and content themselves with the general hope of pardon. But since God alone can forgive sin, he has the undoubted right to prescribe the method; and this he has done in the scriptures of truth. Be entreated, beloved reader, to examine the scriptures on this interesting matter. You have sinned, and art therefore justly under condemnation. It matters not whether you have sinned more grievously than others. Even one sin exposes you to the righteous judgment of God. His law is perfect, and will not admit of a single transgression. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them, Gal. iii. 10.* It is not then by *doing your best*, as many ignorantly imagine, that you can obtain the favour of God. The Bible points out a more excellent way. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, Gal. iii. 13.*

He that believeth in Jesus Christ *shall be saved*. You say, perhaps, you have always believed in Jesus Christ. If you speak thus, you discover your total ignorance of the matter. Men are naturally unbelievers. If you have faith in Jesus, you discern the glory of his character as the alone Redeemer. You credit the testimony which God hath given of his Son, that in him there is life for the guilty, without any respect to their own worthiness or merit. You are convinced that by the deeds of the law, you cannot be justified in the sight of God. And the fruits of faith must unavoidably follow. Having no confidence in the flesh, you rejoice in Christ Jesus, and worship God in the spirit. You live in the fear of the Lord. Redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, you devote yourself to him in soul, body and spirit.

This, my dear reader, is a free, a complete salvation. Thou, as a sinner, guilty, wretched and miserable, art invited to share in its inestimable blessings. *As the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness*, saith the divine Saviour, *even so must the son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life*. Look then to Jesus, and thou shalt be saved. Hear his voice, addressing thee in the gospel, and thy soul shall live. Thou shalt be delivered from condemnation; thou shalt be freed from the power and dominion of sin; thou shalt be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God; and, having finished thy course, thou shalt enter into the joy of the Lord.

Permit me to conclude with a few necessary sentences.

Every one is partial to his own creed: Every one is much disposed to rest more on those proofs which seem to himself to support it, than they can well bear. Perhaps that may be my case with regard to the present subject: But if it be so, I know it not. I think I have examined it with all the attention and impartiality in my power; and I declare, I have as little doubt that this address has held forth most certain truth, as that I now

write it. Persuaded so strongly of this, I am not able to think that any of you can give it an attentive perusal, can weigh the evidence I have brought together, and can think of the subject itself as carefully as you ought, and yet entertain a different view of human nature, how humbling soever it may be to your pride, how loth soever you may be to confess it. I do believe, my friends, that if any of you are of opinion, that you and I and all the world are not by nature sinful, guilty, wretched, and condemned creatures, in continual danger of eternal woe, that either you do not credit divine revelation, or that you are incapable of attending to the state of your own minds, or that through carelessness and dissipation, or too keen a pursuit of earthly things, you live unmindful of your most interesting concerns.

But my wishes and intentions in addressing you on this subject will be very far from being fully gratified merely by leading you to agree in opinion with me about it. There are some things too plain to be denied, too clearly true to be refused a kind of cold and professed assent; an assent with which the heart is altogether unalarmed and unaffected, though the things themselves are in their own nature suited to move its every passion. To confess the fact of sin, or even to acknowledge the source from whence it flows; and to apprehend its true nature and demerit in itself; are very different things. The one is common to all who have a conscience; the other is peculiar to those whose minds are enlightened by the Spirit of God. The one is superficial and transient; the cares and businesses of life erase the impressions of it, as the sun exhales the dews which fell before it shone: The other is deep and lasting; it dwells in the heart, even while it is necessarily employed with attention to secular affairs. Nor do succeeding discoveries of the grace of God by Jesus Christ, and their own interest in it, banish it from thence; on the contrary, it grows with the growth of the knowledge of redemption, and peace of conscience only opens for it a vent to flow forth. The one is a galling yoke under which the sinner reluctantly groans: The other we spontaneously indulge though it be melancholy; it grows by indulgence, and while the

eyes pour down rivers of tears, the heart still breathes the passionate wish of Jeremiah, *Oh that my head were a fountain! Oh that I could weep day and night!* In the one case, the sinner is as a thief when he is caught; i. e. he is prevented from escaping only by the power of those who guard him, and his sorrow is occasioned merely by the shame and the suffering which he feels and fears. The other is the generous grief of him whom his own mind upbraids, and not the reproach of those he hath offended. The danger to which his conduct has exposed him, may, and must, enter into his thoughts; but repentance for his folly is never separated, in his heart, from *disinterested contrition* springing from a sense of his ingratitude and baseness. Judas felt the former, though he went to his own place: But the latter was the grief of Peter, when he went out and wept bitterly.

Further; A desire not only to flee from wrath, but to obtain salvation and eternal glory, doth ever accompany that conviction of sin which is genuine and spiritual. Simon, who was in the gall of bitterness, could intreat an apostle to pray to God that the threatened evil might not come on him: But the jailor (who alone of the two believed the testimony concerning Jesus Christ) cried out, *What shall I do to be saved?*

Once more; The sorrow which works a change of mind, is *godly sorrow*: It comes from God, as well as leads to God; and is begotten and cherished by apprehensions of his holiness and grace in Christ Jesus, rather than by the thoughts of his power and justice displayed in the punishment of sin.

THE END.

